

***A Note to Coaches:
What is Joy for an Athlete?***

“I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart.” I’m guessing that most of you have heard this song, or even sung it at one time or another. What does it mean? What comes to mind? Is this just the song of a bunch of kids having fun? Do you get the picture of a ditzy blonde who has that fake smile and bounces around happily because she is oblivious to life around her? Or is there something deeper represented by the presence of joy in a person’s heart?

Throughout this study you will examine what true joy is all about. Most people are good at putting on a mask of joy. We answer the question, “How are you?” with at least an “OK.” We want people to think we are joyful. True joy, though, is not just something that covers the things we don’t want others to see. Rather, joy is recognizing that you live in the presence of a merciful and yet Almighty God. It is believing, regardless of circumstances, that the providences of God in your life will always be for your good. It flows from knowing “down in your heart” that you are in God’s hands; it is the pleasure and the confidence that this knowledge provides.

Psalm 16:9-11 expresses this thought: “Therefore, my heart is **glad** and my tongue **rejoices**; my body also will **rest** secure, because **You** will not abandon me to the grave, nor will **You** let your holy one see decay. **You** have made known to me the path of life; **You** will fill me with **joy** in your presence, with eternal pleasures at **Your** right hand.”

What will joy look like in the context of your team and your athletes? In the course of a season you will face difficulties together, but it is our hope that as you work through this study, you will together find your pleasure and confidence in the Lord’s promise for your lives. Winning takes on new life because it isn’t an end in itself. In the same way losing brings a joy — not that you are happy because you failed to accomplish your goal, but joy because even in your failure you don’t lose your identity in Christ. Knowing this, you are free and confident to give your best effort every time you play, knowing that your self-worth is not bound in your performance. Your team can be motivated to play to its fullest, in order to bring glory to Him, the source of your joy.

May God bless you, your team, and your season. May this truly be a season of great joy.